

Washington Civic does well by 'Tales of Hoffmann'

By Herman Derlinski
Special to The Washington Star

There are many bridges spanning the Rhine and the Seine rivers, but only a few connect the Rhine to the Seine. These connecting bridges have been built by three German-Jewish emigrants to France during the 19th century: Heinrich Heine, Giacomo Meyerbeer and Jacques Offenbach.

The opera "Les Contes d'Hoffmann" (The Tales of Hoffmann) is one of the strange flowers of this symbiosis. Performed posthumously in Paris in 1881, this opera was an instant success and had to be repeated 101 times. The reasons are not hard to find.

The plot, engendered by the genius of E.T.A. Hoffmann, has a poetic and symbolic dimension which virtually cries out for music, and the music of Offenbach sparkles with a melodic ingenuity that combines French vocal flexibility and elegance with the solidity of the German melos.

LAST NIGHT'S performance by the Washington Civic Opera at Lisner

OPERA

Auditorium under the direction of Richard Weilenmann makes us wish for such a company to function here on a regular repertoire basis. There is a wide step from the vocal studio to the operatic stage, and our young singers need the experience of just such an exposure.

Alfred Anderson sang the roles of Councillor Lindorf, Coppelius, Daperutto and Dr. Miracle with a beautiful and resonant voice and consummate acting skill. Mary Jane Bane handled the difficult coloratura aria of Olympia with a great deal of aplomb and charm. One would have wished for a somewhat lighter instrument.

Helga Bullock's Giuletta benefited from a rich, truly operatic soprano. Bullock has sung in major European opera houses and much is to be expected of her. Jane Stephen was a lovely and touching Antonia in spite of some minor pitch problems.

JOHN SANDOR, singing the role of Hoffmann, has a tenor voice with a

true ring only in the upper range of his tessitura, and then only when he sings forte. The medium range is somewhat white and colorless, which makes him miss some of the most lyrical and beautiful moments in the role.

Adelle Nicholson as Nicklaue, Hoffmann's companion and later on as the voice of the mother, impressed with her acting and her well projected voice. She made a fine contribution to the performance. William Rhodes sang with conviction and nobility. His is a fine and expressive vocal instrument and he uses it with great skill.

E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822), lawyer, author, composer and early music critic, had an enormous influence upon the development of the Romantic movement in Europe. In a certain sense, Schumann, Beethoven, Poe and even Kafka are his direct descendants.

His technique of dissolving time and space, and of vacillating between fantasy and reality are the very foundations upon which all modern cinematic techniques are built.

Lest Van Zandt sound like the Apostle of Angst, it should be repeated that he is very, very funny. His talking blues — a deceptively simple form — are inspired bits of whimsy, especially "Talking Thunderbird Blues." A marvelous facility for ad-libbing embellished an already impressive set.

HAMILTON PROVED to be a fine songwriter as well, although it appeared his sense of melody often paled compared to his strong lyrical sense. Also, some of the uptempo numbers seemed to lack fluidity.

His ballad, "Billboard on the Moon," is a gem of a song, however, integrating skillfully a flowing melodic line and stark, desolate images of a lonely early-morning walk in the city.

Tell the boss he's getting a thorny deal

By Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: For the past six years my husband's boss, who lives out of state, has sent me a huge bouquet of roses on Mother's Day. The box they come in bears the name of a local florist, and their truck delivers them, so it's not as though these flowers have been shipped any great distance. Well, I have never seen sorrier flowers in all my life! It is getting to be an annual joke around

Dear Abby

here. They aren't even worth putting into a vase. I just open the box and carry the flowers right out to the trash.

Then I sit down and write a "thank-you" note for the "beautiful" flowers. I told my husband this year that I think we should tell his boss what kind of flowers he has been paying for. My husband says we should be quiet. What do you say?

— Cheated in Tampa

I say a rose by any other name would smell. And so would the deal you've been getting from your florist. By all means let the sender know the kind of flowers you have been receiving. He would appreciate it.

DEAR ABBY: I am torn between my duty as a wife and my duty as a mother. I am 57 and my husband is 63. I recently received a letter from my daughter, who lives 1,200 miles from here. She said she is leaving her husband after 13 years of marriage and she wants me to come at once to stay with her kids and run her household so she can go back to work.

I don't think it's fair to leave my husband alone, but I hate to turn my daughter down. She didn't say how long she wants me to stay, but she has always been a very selfish girl, and I know once she gets me there, I will have a terrible time getting away. Please help me.

— Torn in Tucson

Tell your daughter that if she plans to go back to work, she had better make permanent arrangements right now for running her household because your place is with your husband, and that's where you intend to stay.

Getting married? Whether you want a formal church wedding or a simple do-your-own-thing ceremony, get Abby's new booklet, "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send \$1 and a long, stamped (24 cents), self-addressed envelope to Abby, c/o The Washington Star, 132 Lasky Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90212.

Van Zandt and Hamilton a delightful combination

By Tim Warren
Special to The Washington Star

Townes Van Zandt is sheer delight to experience. An incisive songwriter, talented guitarist and possessor of a dry, outrageous wit, the native of Houston put on a superb, multi-faceted show at the Cellar Door last night.

His performance and that of the opening act, Dirk Hamilton, made for one of the more enjoyable shows in a D.C. club in recent memory. The pair finishes a two-day stint at the Cellar Door tonight.

Although Van Zandt has been kicking around the folk/blues circuit for a long time, his is hardly a household name — but then again, notoriety and ability seldom are synonymous in music. He is perhaps best known as the writer of grim, mordant, sometimes aching songs. "Pancho and

POP

Lefty," the story of two would-be desperadoes who seek vainly the daring outlaw life, and "If I Needed You," an exquisite love song, are among his songs which have been recorded by other artists.

HIS LYRICS are impressive. Alternating between the simple, yet ironic ("Loretta") and the wild, image-filled ("Mr. Mudd and Mr. Gold"), they let out brief, searing glimpses of fear and pain. Just a little, mind you: Van Zandt soon moves on behind masques of glib wit and grotesque imagery. However short-lived these bagatelles might be, their themes are revealed with power and, paradoxically, honesty; he acknowledges his demons.

Tomorrow's Horoscope

By Sydney Omarr
Friday, May 19, 1978

ARIES (March 21-April 19): If patient and perceptive, you gain. Let others make clear their intentions. Play your own cards close to chest.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Obtain hint from Aries message. Avoid extremes, maintain moderate pace. What seemed a pedestrian task could actually bring profit and glory.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Romance, creativity, relationship that "heats up" — these are part of your personal scenario. Illusion, a degree of wishful thinking also claim their roles.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Stress practical matters, including costs, values,

property rights, taxes, legal rights and permissions.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Intuition works overtime — you are able to convey feelings and to sense what others want, desire and need. Aquarius, Cancer and Capricorn could be in picture.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Strive for new start, added independence, original approach. Money, personal possessions, valuables are spotlighted. Unorthodox procedures command attention.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): One who aided or taught you in past is again available. Know it, make inquiries, tighten loose ends, make personal appearances.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Be adaptable without scattering efforts. What

seems a deep, dark secret could become cause for laughter. Know it and maintain emotional balance.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Friend surprises by announcing a "new deal." Key is to be attentive without becoming inextricably involved.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Be ready for change, travel, variety. Accent on goal, achievement, relating to superiors.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Be philosophical; your thoughts, ideas, are going to gain wider distribution, recognition.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Aura of mystery prevails. Be discreet. Don't reveal all you know. Play cards close to chest.

IF MAY 19 IS your birthday, you are creative, sensual, determined, stubborn and spoiled by the opposite sex. Leo, Aquarius persons play important roles in your life. In October, you extricate yourself from "trap." You are on precipice of greater security, satisfaction, happiness. Keep the faith!

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